

**Subject:** orca critical habitat  
**From:** HWBRANCH@aol.com  
**Date:** Sun, 11 Jun 2006 13:35:49 EDT  
**To:** orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov

Protected Resources Division Chief  
1201 N.E. Lloyd Blvd., Suite 100  
Portland OR 97322-1274  
[orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov](mailto:orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov)

Dear Division Chief:

It's encouraging that the Federal Government is designating 2500 square miles of Puget Sound as critical habitat for orcas. Unfortunately waters shallower than twenty feet are excluded. As I'm sure you know lot happens in these shallower waters.

When we allow the dredging or armoring of estuaries, we're impacting their ability to sustain populations of larvae and algae and their ability to remediate contamination. As such we ultimately impact the survival of orcas.

Here in Olympia we are currently running the estuary of one of the area's most significant streams through a 450 foot long culvert as part of a new development, Smyth Landing. It would have been easy to restore the estuary as a feature of the development but there are no incentives to do so.

The Port of Olympia is planning on dredging a half million cubic yards of material from the Deschutes River estuary. This is being done to accommodate larger ships. We all know that as ships get larger they need to be docked closer to the ocean; tearing up our inland waters is a mistake.

Salmon and other fish, diving ducks, harbor porpoises and other indicator species that rely on forage fish for food are all in serious decline. We know this and we know what the problem is and yet we cannot bring ourselves to do the right thing. I'm sure that as time passes these realizations will become more apparent. In the meantime, the process of political realization is agonizingly slow.

It's my impression that NOAA is doing everything politically possible. Thank you for all your efforts including this current designation. It's encouraging to see some movement in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Harry W. Branch  
239 Cushing Street NW  
Olympia WA 98502

**Subject:** orcas again  
**From:** HWBRANCH@aol.com  
**Date:** Sun, 11 Jun 2006 14:20:59 EDT  
**To:** orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov

Protected Resources Division Chief  
1201 N.E. Lloyd Blvd., Suite 100  
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Dear Division Chief:

A thought comes to mind since my previous email. The dredging being planned by the Port of Olympia will result in depths that are greater than 20 feet, in some cases greater than forty feet, and as such falls under the category of critical habitat.

The Port is planning on expanding and deepening the turning basin, the berths next to the dock and the outer channel. They describe this removal of a half million cubic yards of benthic soil as "maintenance" and have issued a determination of "nonsignificance" freeing themselves from having to issue and Environmental Impact Statement.

There are currently several appeals in process concerning noncompliance to SEPA regulations and other issues.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Harry W. Branch  
239 Cushing Street NW  
Olympia WA 98502

**Subject:** orca habitat  
**From:** HWBRANCH@aol.com  
**Date:** Sun, 6 Aug 2006 12:33:20 EDT  
**To:** orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov

Re: Orca Habitat

Dear NOAA Habitat Specialists,

I have been volunteering for the past ten years with a couple of local groups in attempts to save nearshore and estuarine habitats in South Puget Sound. This effort has been nothing but frustrating. At Smyth Landing we've seen condos and a retail outlet built on top of a major stream estuary that runs through a 450 foot long culvert. The Port of Olympia has filled and paved the upper beach to build a restaurant and is planning on dredging 500,000 cubic yards of benthic soil out of the Deschutes River Estuary. There have been no attempts to restore or preserve anything in Budd Inlet, the southernmost point in Puget Sound.

The Governor's plan to "clean up" Puget Sound has once again diverted our attention away from nearshore development and toward failing septic systems and boat discharges, problems that are minimal by comparison. This tendency among media, agencies and NGOs is so pervasive it would be easy to come to suspect a conspiracy; keep our attention elsewhere so development can proceed unencumbered.

Whatever the reasons it's obvious that local and state governments are not going to address this situation realistically. I am encouraged to know that NOAA is now involved. Perhaps the light of day will finally emerge.

Sincerely,

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(360) 943-8508